

Jeff Renfrow

To Whom It May Concern:

April 17, 2013

I am writing in regards to SB 838 and SB 401-5. I am in support of both of these bills in order to protect Oregon's rivers and fish from suction dredge mining.

I am a commercial river guide in southern Oregon on the Rogue, Klamath, Illinois and Owyhee rivers. Though I am not an Oregon citizen, I make my living in Oregon as a raft guide and care greatly about Oregon's rivers, their health, protection and vitality.

I work as a guide for a small, Rogue Valley outfitter who prides itself in introducing visitors to the state and the beauty of Oregon's rivers and remote areas. Not only do we provide people with the adventure and thrill of whitewater rafting but we offer them the experience of quiet, peaceful, beautiful wilderness and the ability to "get away" from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. For the last three years I have guided trips on the Rogue River. On one specific section of the Rogue I have seen the practice of suction dredge mining increase and become a hindrance and a danger to an otherwise relaxing, fun, and peaceful river trip.

The trip that we run on this section of the middle Rogue is designed to be an "introduction to rafting" trip for those who have never done any whitewater rafting. It runs in such a way to ease people into the sport and ends with exciting whitewater and great beauty, which inevitably gets people excited and makes them want to do more. It is one of our "bread and butter" runs and is how we as guides get folks to come back and join us on longer, more involved trips therefore bringing us more work as guides and helping our business to grow and flourish.

Unfortunately, this run is now marred by more than 25 dredges during the summer months which clog up the river channel, create a great deal of noise with their motors, emit gasoline fumes and pollute the river with fuel spills and trash. When I first began running this stretch of river I was shocked to see so many of them in one spot and was surprised that Oregon didn't have more strict regulations so as to prevent this.

Over the years I have had guests complain about the noise and the eye sore that the dredges cause and I do not believe that this is the way we should be introducing visitors to Oregon's rivers and streams. In the first 30 minutes of this river trip, you can hardly talk to people in your boat due to the noise from all of the running motors. Something must be done to mitigate this activity and to protect our rivers and fish and therefore the rafting and fishing industries that rely on clear, quiet, scenic rivers.

I strongly support Senate bills 838 and 401-5 and urge you to look carefully at the ramifications of this activity on our recreational rafting and fishing economy, our safety

as guides and outfitters, as well as the health and well being of our rivers and fish. Oregon is commonly referred to as a progressive state and being from Texas I would agree. But I have to question its progressiveness when it continues to allow harmful practices such as suction dredge mining in its already threatened rivers and salmon runs.

Thank you for your consideration and energy around this issue.

Jeff Renfrow – River Guide  
Momentum River Expeditions